

# Vaikhanasa

**Vaikhanasa**, member of a South Indian minority group within Vaishnavism, a form of Hinduism characterized by devotion to the god Vishnu. Vaikhanasas were originally an early order of ascetics who, upon abandoning life in the forest, took to the management of temples. Vaikhanasas worship in accordance with the ritual prescribed in the Vaikhanasa Samhitas, one of two collections of ritual texts. The Pancharatra Samhitas supplanted the Vaikhanasa Samhitas within most of Vaishnavism in the 12th century at the urging of the great Vedanta theologian Ramanuja (c. 1017–1137), but the Vaikhanasa ritual continues to be followed in most South Indian Vaishnava temples, including the Kanchipuram and Sriperumbudur temples in Tamil Nadu state and the Venkateshvara shrine on Tirupati hill in Andhra Pradesh. One major difference between the two types of ritual practice is that the Vaikhanasas revere neither the Alvars (Tamil poet-mystics) nor the Acharyas (early Vaishnava teachers).

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